

How Soviet spies went after the blueprints for the defense of Europe—with sex, money, and ice-cold cunning.

THE ASSAULT ON NATO

BY DAVID LEWIS

In the red safelight glow of a Bonn darkroom, a technician took a thumbnail-wide roll of black-and-white film from the drying cupboard and carried it over to a viewing box. With a magnifying glass, he swiftly examined the oblong negatives, which had been taken by a Minox camera. It was a routine check, carried out at the request of the Bonn police to catch amateur pornographers who sometimes used the inconspicuous miniature cameras. But what the technician now saw through his powerful lens was far from routine. The first nine negatives contained pictures of documents, and at the top of each document were the words *NATO. Security Classification—Cosmic Top Secret.*

The time was 6:20 P.M. The date, Friday, September 27, 1968. One of the most astonishing spy dramas in the history of Western security was about to be blown wide open. Within the space of only two weeks, a German admiral with nearly forty years' service, who was one of the West's top military planners at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), would be shot dead; the deputy chief of the West German secret service would put a bullet through his brain; several other top officials would also die violently; and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would be seen to have suffered the most far-reaching and humiliating security defeat in its history.

When the startled technician hurried out of the darkroom to report his discovery, Frau Trude Helke, the manager of the photographic shop on Bonn's Sternstrasse, was just locking up for the night. With a few terse words of explanation, he handed her the film and the glass. Frau Helke first checked the negatives and then her pile of order forms to discover the name and address of the customer. It was easily located. The film had been left at the shop the previous Monday and the cost of processing paid in advance. The client had asked that the negatives and a set of prints be posted to him in Belgium. His name was Rear Admiral Hermann Luedke; his address: the officers' quarters, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, at Mons. Frau Helke locked the negatives into a drawer and phoned the police. She was not long in being joined by an inspector of the Fourteenth (Political) Commissariat, who immediately drove to the shop, where

he examined and took charge of the film. Then he called the headquarters of Militärischer Abschirmdienst (MAD, or Military Counterintelligence) and told them what had been discovered. They did some quick checking and found that

Luedke was still in Bonn. The admiral, in fact, was attending a banquet that evening at military headquarters. At the very early age of fifty-seven, he was retiring because of ill health, and the banquet was a farewell present from his fellow officers. Three senior investigators from military counterintelligence drove to the building.

In the banquet hall, Admiral Luedke was listening, with suitable modesty, as General Ulrich de Maiziere, the chief of the defense staff, extolled his personal and military virtues. The speeches completed, Admiral Luedke posed for photographs beside the general. Afterwards, as he prepared to leave, General de Maiziere drew him to one side. "May I have a word with you, Hermann?" he asked quietly. "There is a room over there where we can speak in private."

Bewildered, Luedke followed his superior from the banquet hall, into an office. The door was closed firmly behind him. With an embarrassed air, General de Maiziere nodded towards three civilians. "These gentlemen are from military counterintelligence, Hermann. I am sorry about this. It hardly seems the occasion for such a thing, but the matter is urgent."

Appearing completely mystified, Hermann Luedke sat down in a red plush armchair and looked from one security man to the next for enlightenment. The roll of negatives was produced, together with a set of hastily made prints, and Luedke was asked if he recognized the various pictures.

The admiral flipped through a group of family snaps and cheerfully admitted he had taken them. Then he came to three photographs of the license plate of his Ford car, frowned thoughtfully, and said that he didn't recall taking those particular shots.

His look of bewilderment changed to one of mild embarrassment when he came to the next batch of prints, which showed an attractive nude. But it was not until he reached the final nine prints that Luedke's expression dramatical-